

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

March 15, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As you begin work on the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we request that you provide at least level funding for the Assistance to Firefighters (FIRE) Grant Program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program. The costs of equipment are rising, as are current levels of demand, and robust funding is vitally important to help address these issues.

The FIRE Grant Program has positively affected public safety by providing nearly \$7 billion since 2001 for infrared cameras, personal protective gear, hazmat detection devices, improved breathing apparatuses, and interoperable communications systems. This equipment is critical to ensuring the safety of firefighters as they respond to emergencies and protect our communities. The cost of this equipment, however, continues to grow year to year. In addition, the demand for FIRE grants continues to increase with, on average, approximately \$3 billion worth of applications submitted annually. It is important that funding for FIRE grants keeps pace with costs and demand.

Similarly, the SAFER Grant Program provides much-needed funding for career and volunteer fire departments to hire, recruit, and retain firefighters. This program is critical because two-thirds of all career and volunteer fire departments in our nation do not have sufficient personnel to protect the public effectively. In order to bring our nation's fire departments to the staffing levels needed to serve their communities and respond emergencies, the SAFER program must be adequately funded.

We have an obligation to protect those who protect us by providing them with the necessary resources to perform their jobs as safely and effectively as possible. We urge you to help Congress meet that obligation by accounting for the increased needs of the FIRE and SAFER programs in the FY 2017 Homeland Security Appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration of this request and your ongoing commitment to our nation's firefighters.

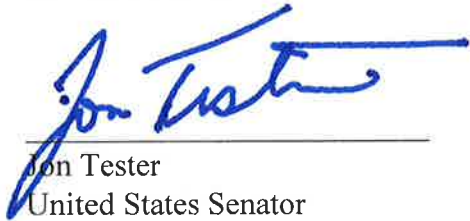
Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



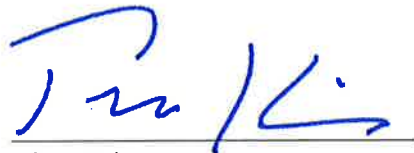
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United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



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Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator



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United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



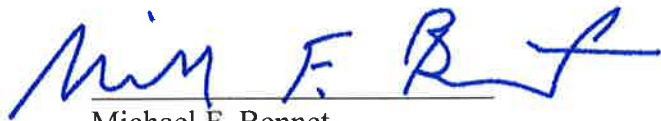
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United States Senator



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United States Senator



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